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Some Lose All Of Possessions On Departure

CPYRGHT

HAVANA, Dec. 26 (AP)

The freighter African Pilot packed with 923 Cuban emigrants—healthy and ailing, bedfast and waving emotionally from the rails—sailed tonight for Florida.

Released by a "Christmas bonus" deal with Fidel Castro, they will rejoin their close relatives, the Bay of Pigs prisoners ransomed earlier this week. Some of them left behind everything they own.

It had been thought earlier that about 1000 relatives would be cleared to leave. But after the long line had shuffled

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Several on Stretchers

The tropical heat and the emotional strain had taken its toll. Several people were carried aboard on stretchers. Others collapsed when they reached the deck.

Rebecca Lamas, about 20, whose mother was unable to make the trip, sobbed "Mama, Mama," as she came aboard. A Miami nurse, Sonjia King, helped her down the narrow passageway. A physician said the girl was in hysterical shock.

Another woman wept all the way up the gangway, then smiled, looked back once at the pier and said, "Viva Kennedy."

An estimated 70 per cent of those going were women and children.

Just as the African Pilot heaved up her gangway, a shabbily dressed Negro about 25 years old bounded up to

The U. S. is not planning to embark on any new "soft" policy toward Castro.
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U. S. officials hoping for early release of 23 Americans held in Cuba.
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Local attorneys relate roles in prisoner ransom.
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through in the hot sun to board the freighter, Cuban Red Cross officials said the tally was 923 and that no more would arrive.

Vessel Converted

An old man and three youngsters were the last to walk the long gangway onto the deck of the 10,000-ton vessel, hurriedly converted to makeshift passenger accommodation after a trip here with \$11 million worth of the ransom goods.

At one point, Nancy Rodriguez, a representative of the Prisoners' Families Committee, went aboard to appeal to ship's captain, Alfred Boerum, to permit more people to leave. She said there were "more relatives who want to go with you."

Boerum reluctantly refused her entreaty of "not even one more?" He explained, "I cannot do it. It would be unsafe."

the deck shrieking "Ayudame!" (Help me!).

Gangway guards barred him from boarding. Cuban soldiers dragged him back to the dock, where they released him. A man in worker's clothes put an arm around the would-be stowaway and led him away.

The freighter was escorted through Havana harbor by Cuban police boats, which turned back several pleasure craft. Hundreds of persons lined the downtown harbor streets.

At one street corner a large crowd stopped traffic. Many were singing what refugees aboard the ship said was the Communist "Internationale." Others chanted "Cuba si, Yanqui no."

But many in the crowd whistled, cheered and shouted encouragement.

Many of the refugees aboard the ship tried to get topside for a last look at their homeland, but the deck officers ordered all below because of the narrow deck. The freighter left Havana harbor at 6:51 p. m. (EST). With cruising time estimated

at 14 hours, the ship would arrive about 9 a. m. Thursday at Port Everglades, 25 miles north of Miami.

Three U. S. Coast Guard cutters met the African Pilot less than an hour out of Havana's port. A Coast Guard patrol boat was to meet the ship off the Florida coast and guide her into Port Everglades.

Some of the women—still wearing hair curlers in their rush to pretty up for the departure—had daubed away tears as the exodus to the ship got under way. Mothers clung to their youngsters, who were bewildered by the commotion. Men wore their Sunday best.

The slow march through six security and customs checkpoints, manned by military personnel, strung along 2 miles over dusty roads to the dockside.

After passing a customs checkpoint the emigrants were left with little but the clothes on their back. They were not allowed to take out any Cuban money.

Castro's terms were that in their new homes they had to surrender their homes and everything else in Cuba. But property and

possessions could be held in their names provided one member of the family stayed.

Cuban Red Cross officials were circumspect—and in some instances even solicitous—as the lines formed at the foot of the gangway leading to the African Pilot.

U.S. Health and Immigration teams were set up at Port Everglades to give any needed inoculations.

After processing, which is expected to take about 3 hours, the exiles will be loaded into 30 buses and escorted by the Florida Highway Patrol to a huge auditorium in Miami where they will be reunited with the prisoners.